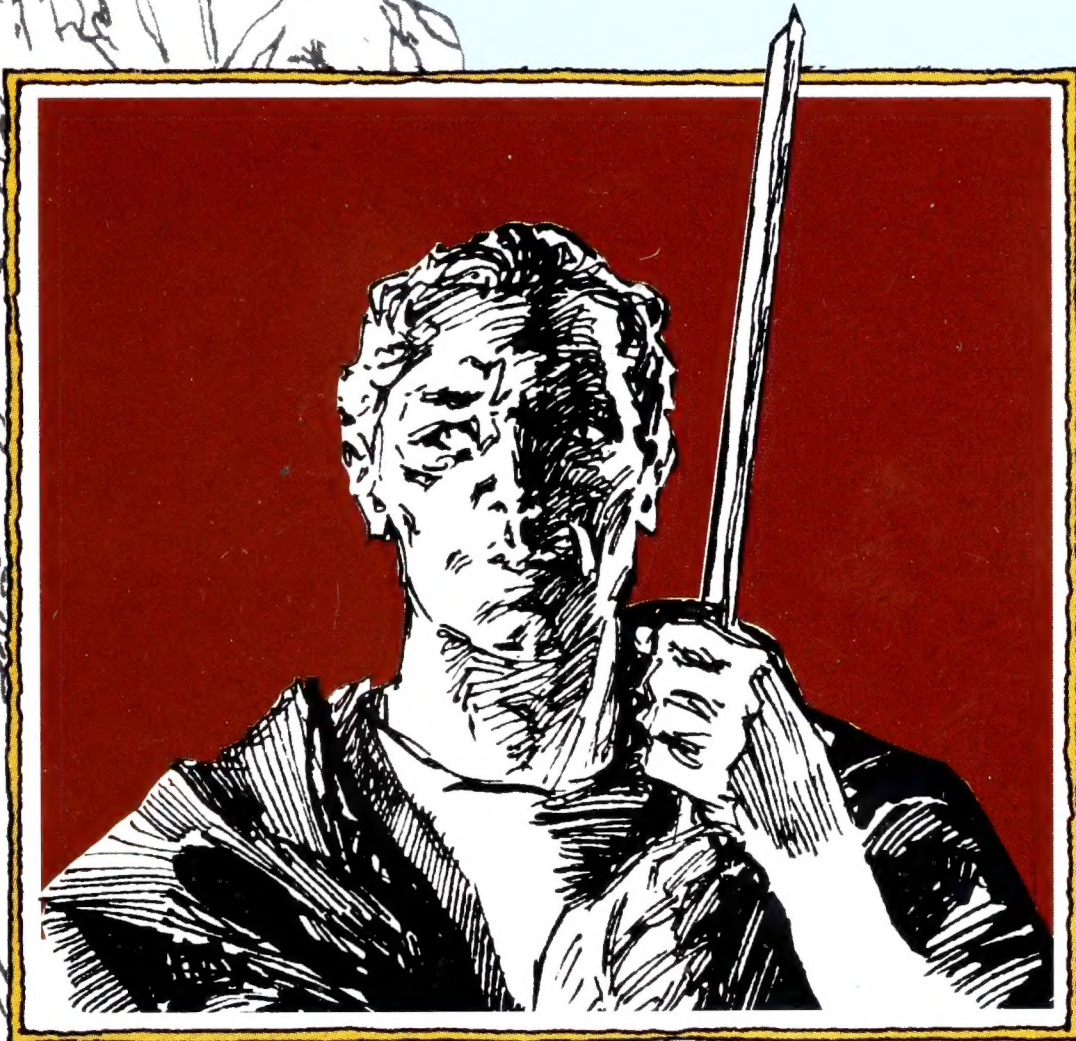




HANNIBAL

BY ALEX SIMMONS



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Farmington



You can be trained to hate. Just as you can be trained to hunt, or to plant and grow food from the earth.

In 247 B.C., Hamilcar Bacar was in his ninth year of war with Rome. He was fighting for his city, Carthage. Carthage was one of many cities his people (Phoenicians) had built as a port for trading goods. Rome and Carthage were rivals, but every year Rome grew stronger. Hamilcar was fighting to keep Carthage free of Roman control.

In that year, Hamilcar was given another reason for wanting Carthage free. His first son, Hannibal, was born.

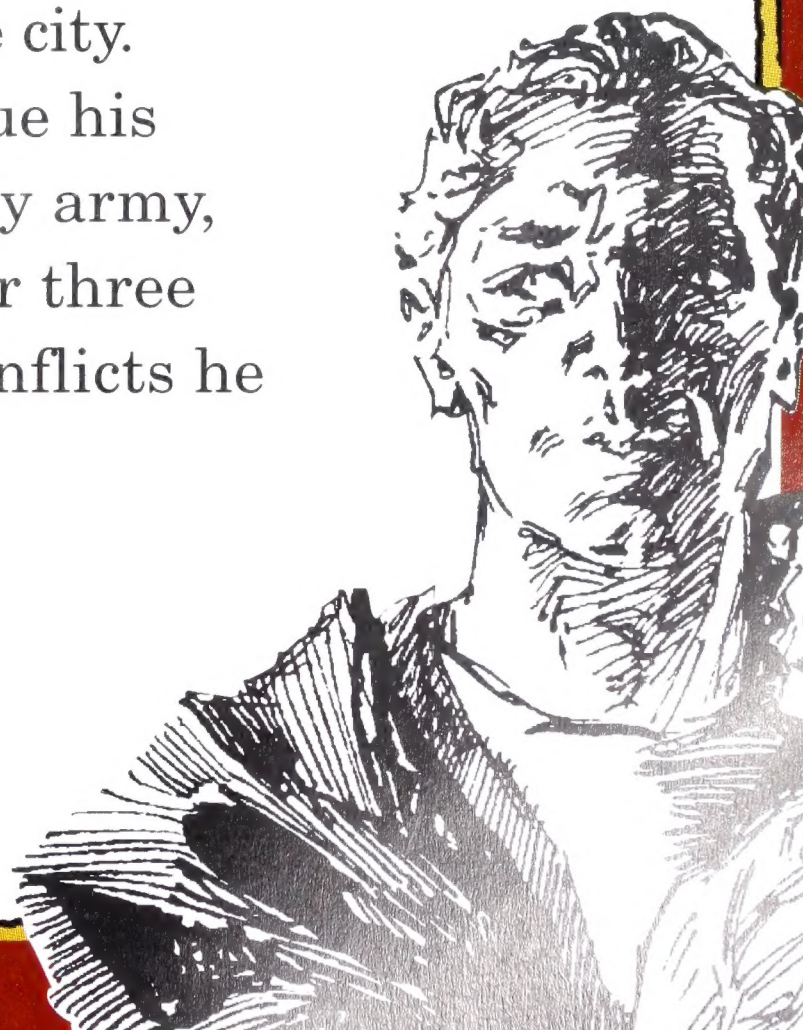
For the next six years, the war with Rome continued. Hamilcar roamed Italy, striking wherever he could. Hannibal was there to see it all.

He wandered the camp, listening and learning from the soldiers. He also learned from the mercenaries, or hired soldiers, who fought beside his father. They were of many different races from North Africa, Spain, and Italy. In the camps, Hannibal heard a dozen different languages. He smelled a hundred spices in the air. This was Hannibal's whole world. War was all that he knew.

In 241 B.C., when Carthage surrendered to Rome, Hamilcar and his army were sent back to Carthage. There, Hannibal watched as the leader of the city refused to pay the mercenaries their back pay. This was not a wise decision.

Hamilcar argued that the men had done their job. They deserved their reward. The leader would not listen. So the mercenaries banded together and attacked the city.

Hamilcar was forced to rescue his people. Pulling together a mighty army, he fought 40,000 mercenaries for three years. It was one of the worst conflicts he had ever fought.



But he won, and was made commander-in-chief of the Carthaginian army in Africa. Again, Hannibal was there to see it all.

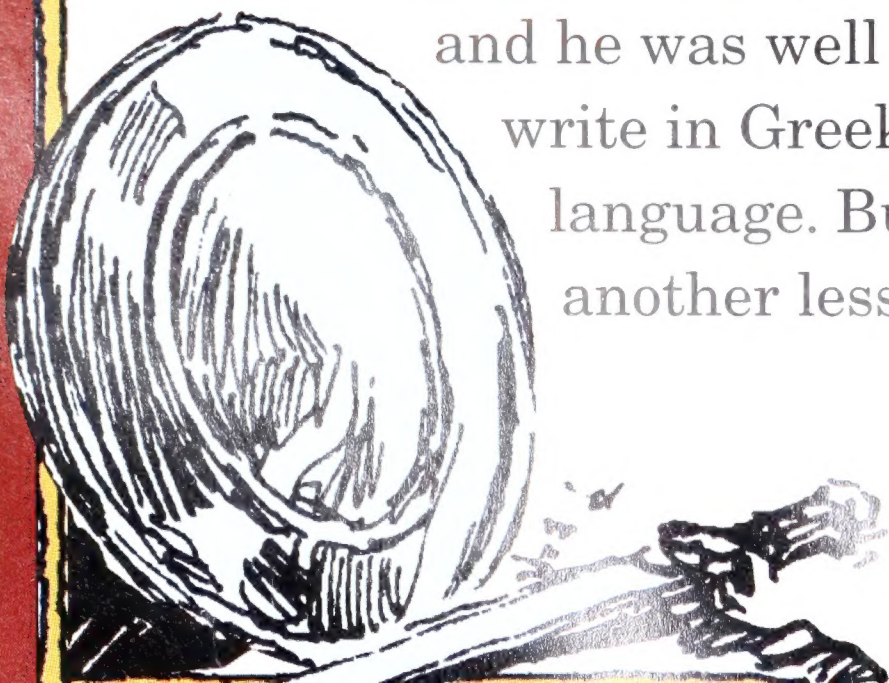
Even with victory, Hamilcar was not at peace. He still wanted war with Rome. Soon he had gathered the best fighters of the land. He prepared to sail.

Hannibal, then only nine years old, begged his father to take him along. It is said that Hamilcar took Hannibal to a sacred altar. There he made his son promise that he would always hate the Romans.

“Be a thorn in their side,” his father had told him. Hannibal vowed that he would. It was a promise he kept the rest of his life. But it would cost him everything.



Hannibal was born with a great mind, and he was well educated. He could read and write in Greek as well as in his own language. But Hannibal had learned another lesson: hate.



In 238 B.C., Hannibal, his father, and his three younger brothers, Hasdrubal, Hanno, and Mago, arrived in Spain. For nine years, Hannibal watched his father build up trade and money for Carthage. He also gathered men for his great war. But before he could begin to fight, Hamilcar was killed.

The man to take his place was a great leader, too. With sweet words and gifts he brought many Celtic and Iberian tribes under his control. He even took control of the land surrounding a nearby city, Saguntum. This city was protected by Rome.

When force was needed, young Hannibal was given the task. At only eighteen, he was already a skilled warrior and respected by his men. Times were good.

But times change. In 221 B.C., the new leader was struck down by an assassin.

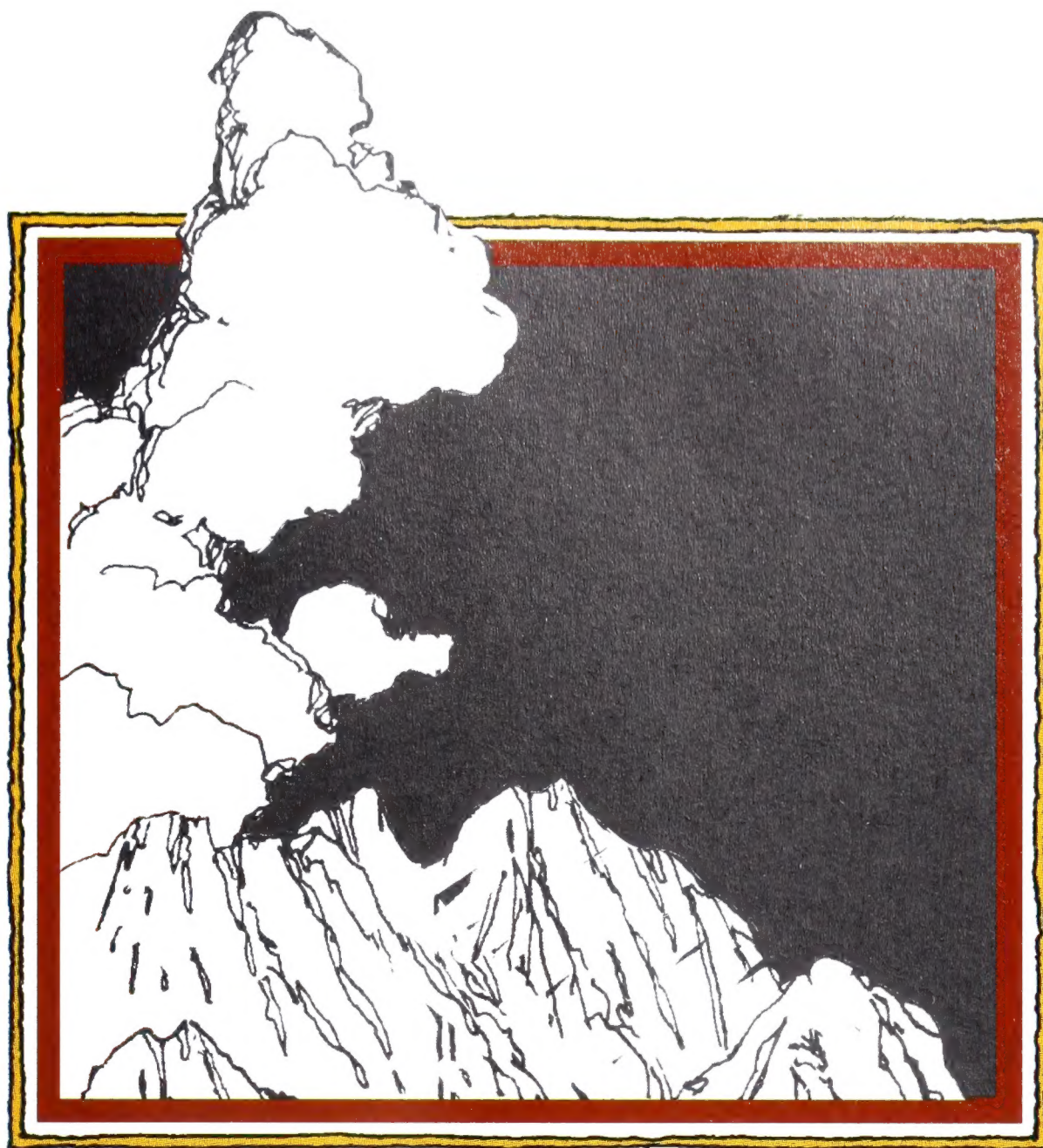
Hannibal was immediately named the commander-in-chief. He was twenty-nine years old. Now he was in a position to live up to his vow of revenge. Rome would fall.

Hannibal had two special gifts that set him apart from other young leaders, wisdom and patience. Many books speak about his planning genius. Several famous battle plans are credited to Hannibal.

Immediately, he set out to get the support of the political leaders of Carthage. They did not really want another war with Rome. But Hannibal knew that their weakness was greed.

He took his army to Saguntum. For eight months he held the city captive. No food or supplies could go in, and no one could get out. When Saguntum surrendered, Hannibal sent riches to the leaders of Carthage. Rome was furious. They sent a demand that Hannibal be turned over to them. When Carthage refused, Rome declared war. Hannibal's plan had worked.



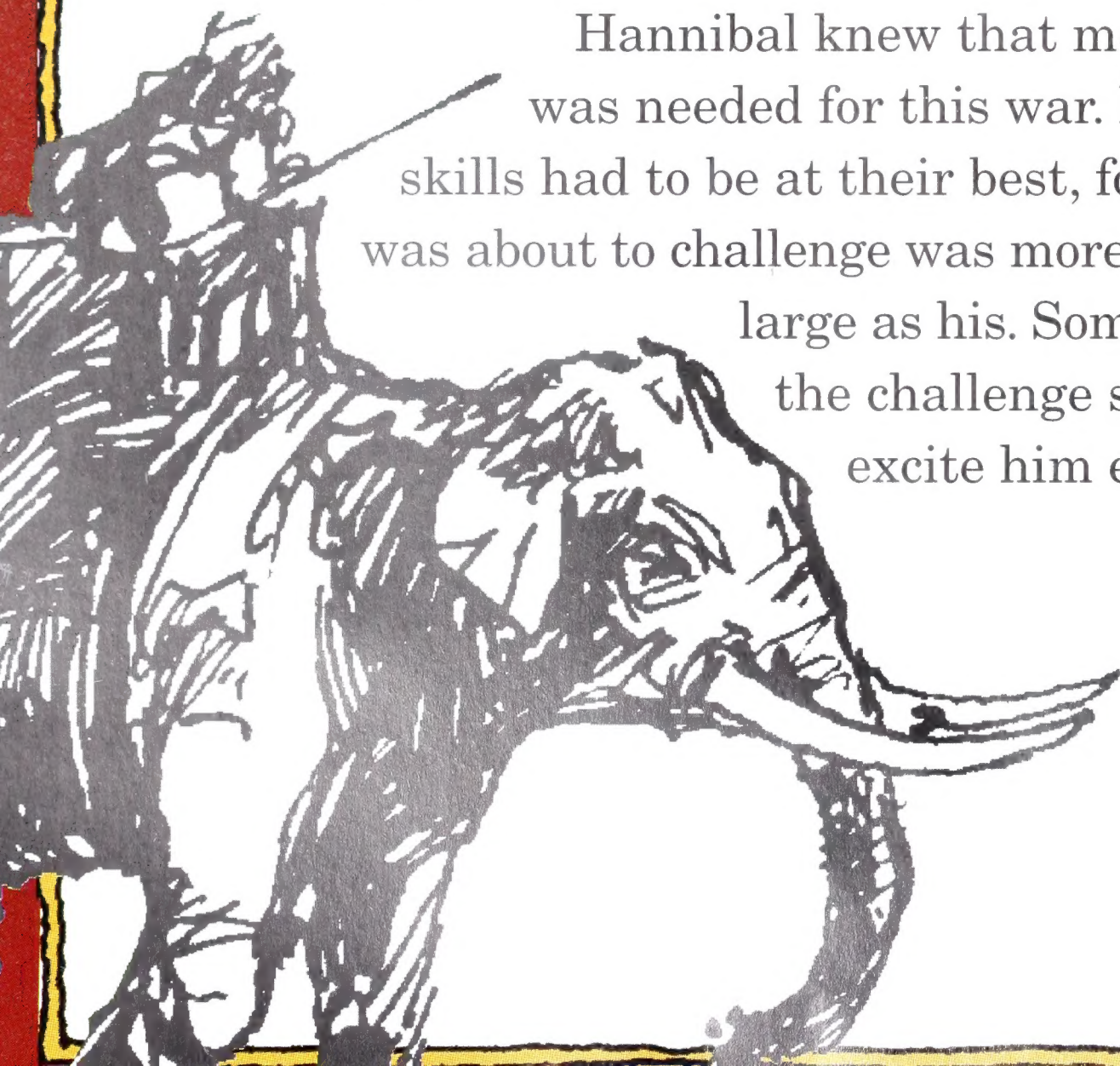


Hannibal took great care in building his army. Like his father's soldiers, these men were mostly mercenaries. He united people of many different backgrounds to fight under him. His horsemen were Numidian tribes from Africa. He chose "slingers" from the Balearic Islands. These men were experts at throwing stones with deadly aim from leather slings. Some fighters were Libyans and Greeks, and some were from along the African and Spanish coasts. His army was about 140,000 strong.

Hannibal sent a small force to defend Carthage. He also sent spies to Italy. He wanted to know everything about his enemies—what their strengths were. He also wanted to know about the country through which he would march. Which tribes were his friends, and which were his foes? What was the land like? What was the weather like? Where were the best sources of food and water?

Rome had complete control of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. The Italian hill tribes were loyal to Rome. Many of the Gauls of France were sworn enemies of Rome, but could Hannibal trust them to be on his side?

Hannibal knew that more than force was needed for this war. His planning skills had to be at their best, for the force he was about to challenge was more than twice as large as his. Somehow, the challenge seemed to excite him even more.



In the spring of 218 B.C., Hannibal said good-bye to his wife and their two-year-old son. With an army of 90,000 foot soldiers, 12,000 horse soldiers, and 37 elephants, he marched toward Italy. His trip from New Carthage to Italy was a dangerous 1,500-mile trek. His army would travel through dense countryside, across the land of hostile tribes, over the Alps, and into battle with over 200,000 Roman soldiers.

Why elephants? They were the tanks of Hannibal's time. The Roman soldiers had never been able to train them for battle. But the Carthaginians had used elephants very well. Their great size and weight could withstand most spears and swords. Their fierce trumpeting frightened enemies, who were then trampled by the thundering herds.

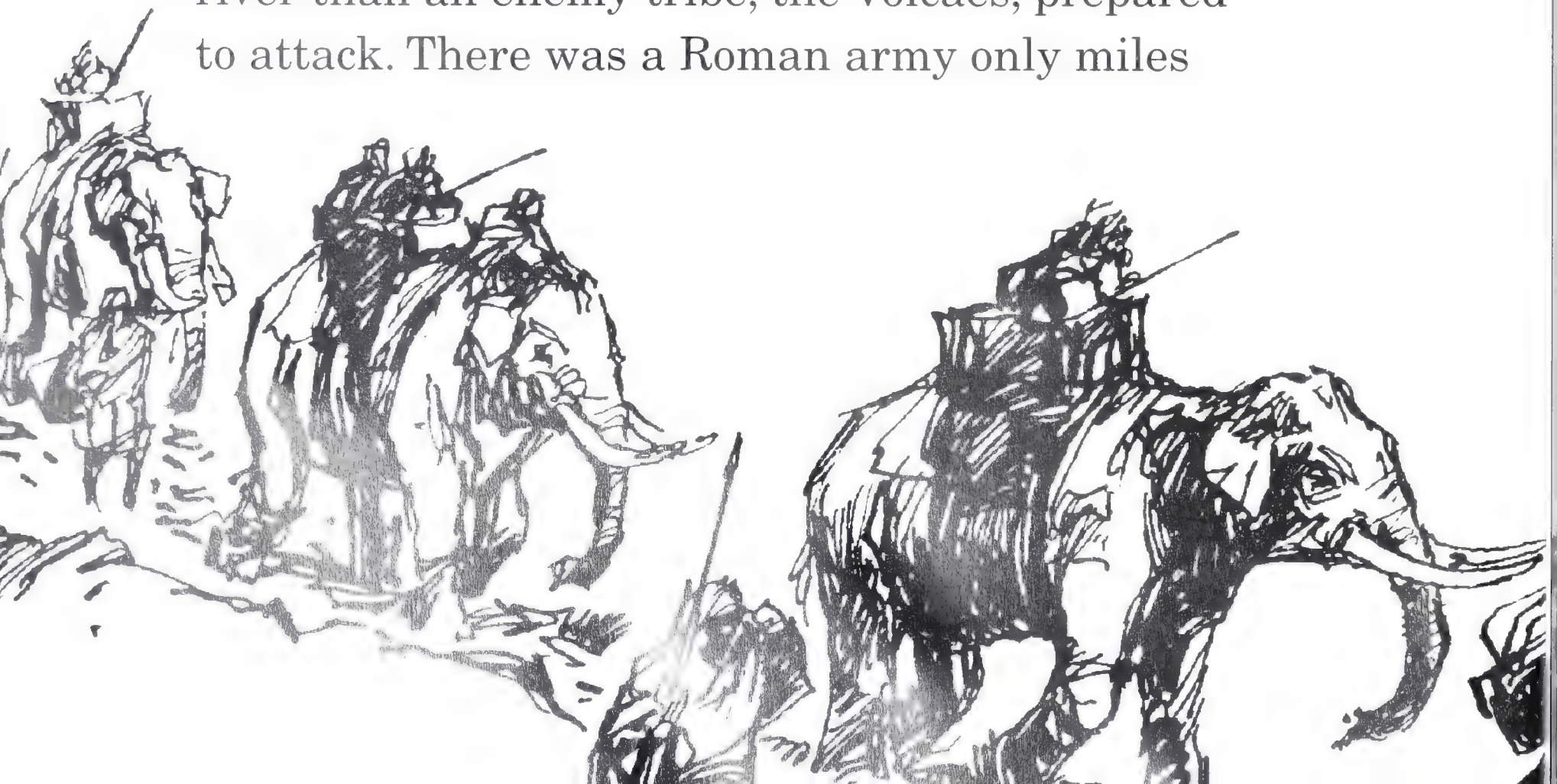
As he and his troops marched along the coast of Spain, Hannibal could see his ships sailing on the Mediterranean Sea. The ships carried supplies and acted as scouts against the Romans.



Before Hannibal's army reached the Pyrenees mountains, they had battled with five separate tribes, who after being defeated had joined Hannibal's army. But he had also lost thousands of soldiers in battle. By this time, Hannibal's 102,000-man army was down to 59,000. Still he continued, crossing the Pyrenees and moving toward the Rhône River in France.

Once Rome knew about Hannibal, they sent soldiers to Spain to stop him. Their commander, Publius Cornelius Scipio, wanted to stop Hannibal before he reached the Rhône. But Hannibal was already there. He made friends quickly with the local tribes. In two days, they helped him build canoes and rafts. These boats would take his army across the river.

No sooner was Hannibal ready to cross the river than an enemy tribe, the Volcaes, prepared to attack. There was a Roman army only miles

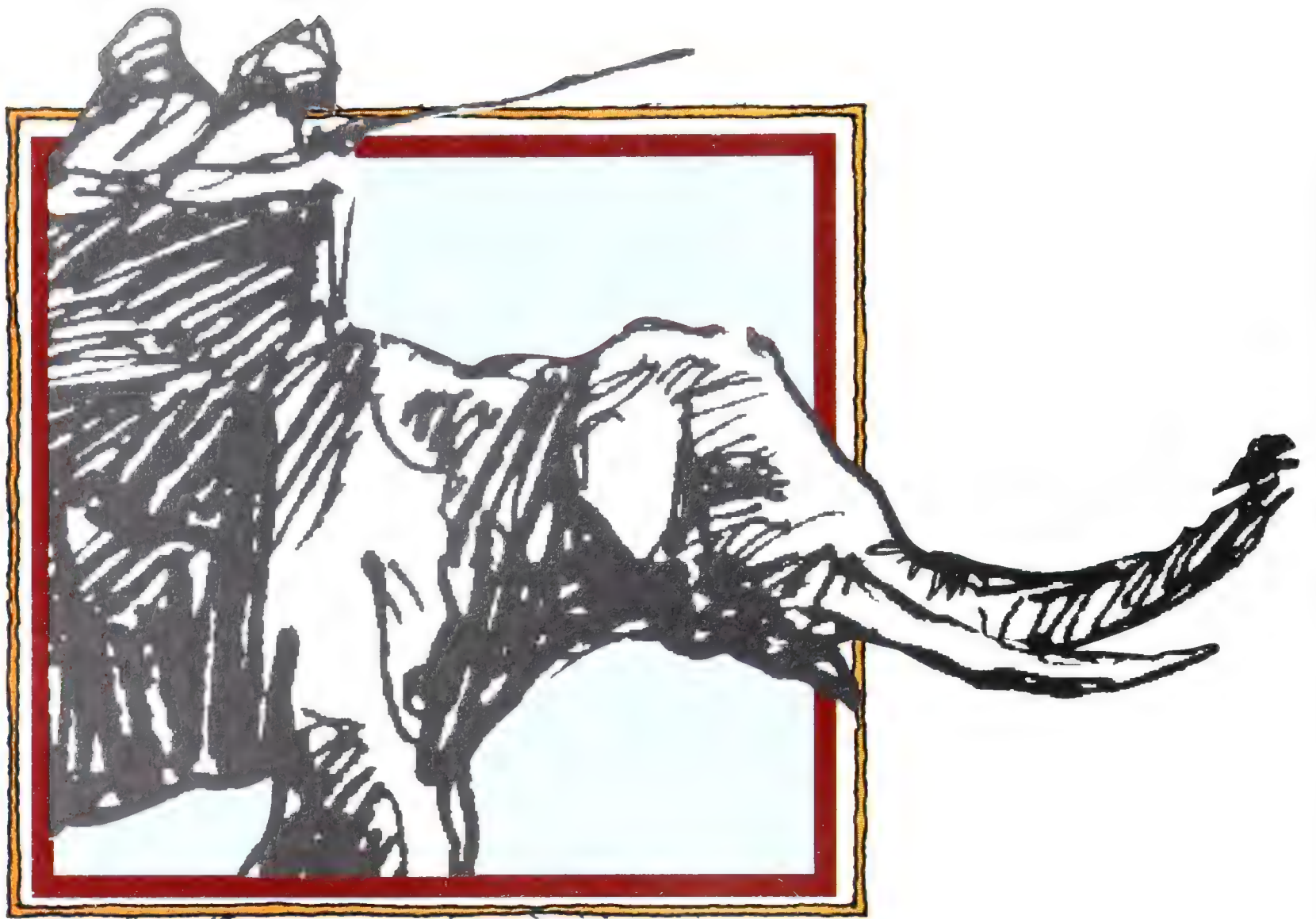


away, a river to cross with thousands of men and elephants, and now this. But Hannibal was up to the challenge.

At night, he sent part of his army to cross the river farther upstream. From there, they marched back downstream, hid, and waited. The next day, when the enemy attacked, half of Hannibal's forces met them in the river. As the battle raged, the Volcaes saw the rest of Hannibal's men attacking from behind them. The fight ended quickly.

After the battle was won, Hannibal's men made large rafts to ferry thirty-seven elephants across the river. When the Romans arrived, Hannibal's army was gone. He had taken his men west toward the center of France. When the Roman commander saw this, he took his men back to their ships and sailed for Italy. Finally, Hannibal turned toward his true goal, the Alps. No one believed an army





could cross those treacherous mountains.
Hannibal was about to try.

Hannibal knew how good it was to have people on his side. He made friends with a tribe near the mountains. They gave his army food and warmer clothing. After marching for a few more days, Hannibal and his army began to climb. It was October, 218 B.C.

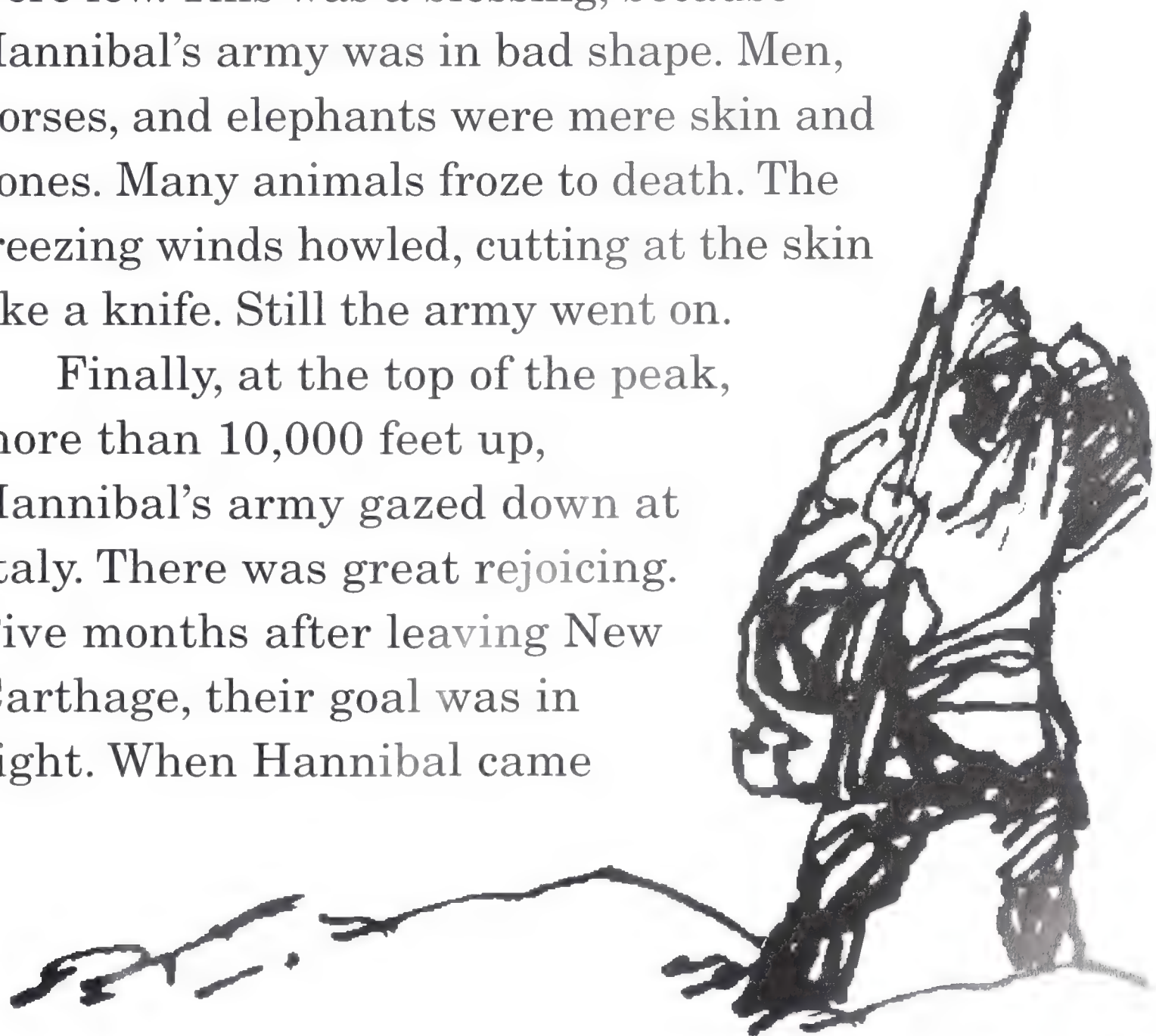
The climb was filled with hardships, dangers, and death. Unfriendly tribes attacked them with spears and boulders. Hannibal defeated them all. Heavy snowfalls covered narrow paths and deep holes. Men and animals slipped and fell to their deaths. Hannibal had chosen one of the highest

passes in the Alps (the Col de la Traversette). From its top, one could look down on a beautiful view of Italy. He hoped that such a view would inspire his men.

The climbing continued. At one point, a group of Gauls offered to guide him through the most dangerous section of the Alps. Within two days they had led him into a trap. But Hannibal had been suspicious and had prepared for combat. The attack lasted barely twenty-four hours. In the end, Hannibal was victorious.

Word of Hannibal's fighting skills reached many other villages. Attacks by other tribes were few. This was a blessing, because Hannibal's army was in bad shape. Men, horses, and elephants were mere skin and bones. Many animals froze to death. The freezing winds howled, cutting at the skin like a knife. Still the army went on.

Finally, at the top of the peak, more than 10,000 feet up, Hannibal's army gazed down at Italy. There was great rejoicing. Five months after leaving New Carthage, their goal was in sight. When Hannibal came



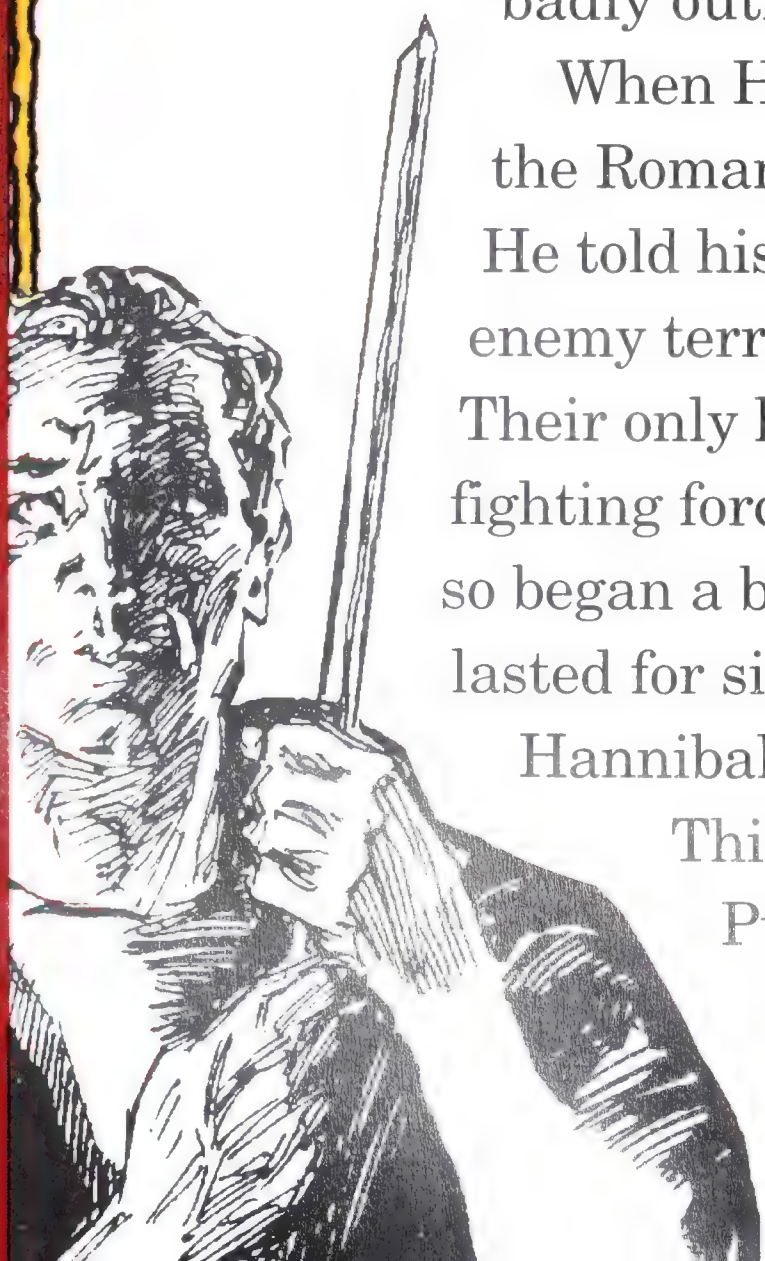
down out of the mountains, he was left with only 38,000 men. Between the Rhône River and the bottom of the Alps, he had lost 22,000 men.

He immediately made friends with some Gallic tribes. His men were given food, fresh clothing, and a chance to rest. But the rest period was short.

News reached Rome of Hannibal's amazing feat. A Roman army, commanded by Publius Scipio, was not far away. A second army of Roman soldiers was sent to join Publius. Hannibal's little army would be badly outnumbered.

When Hannibal's spies told him about the Roman armies, he launched a bold plan. He told his men that all territory was enemy territory until they conquered it. Their only hope was to be the fiercest fighting force the world had ever known. And so began a battle of wits and weapons that lasted for sixteen years. From 218–202 B.C., Hannibal fought Rome on Italian soil.

This was known as the Second Punic War.



During that time, Hannibal outwitted more than ten Roman generals. He divided their ranks from each other. His battle plans taunted them into attacking before they were ready. When Hannibal restored his supply of elephants, he attacked larger armies and sent them running for their lives.

One Roman general, Quintus Fabius, was successful in avoiding many of Hannibal's traps and tricks. Quintus simply outwaited Hannibal. But the people of Rome were hungry for total victory over the African warrior. When Quintus's term was up, an impatient general took over . . . and lost heavily to Hannibal.

Though he was strong enough, and feared enough, Hannibal never actually attacked Rome. The city he had hated all his life remained scared but safe. Why? That is a question historians and military minds have wondered about for years.

The outcome of Hannibal's war with Rome is peculiar. Rome did not fall. Instead, after sixteen years, Hannibal's name was known from Africa to Italy. He was known to be wise and courageous and was well-respected, but he

had lost thousands of lives—among them, his three brothers. Each was killed in a battle far from home.

Hannibal's only defeat in war was on his own soil. He returned to defend Carthage. There he met a young Roman general who had admired and studied Hannibal's methods. After the war was over, and politicians had made their deals, the young Roman visited Hannibal. It is said they spoke respectfully to each other.

Later, Hannibal's political enemies started rumors that he was once again building an army to attack Rome. It was the young Roman general who defended Hannibal, but other Romans did not believe the young general. They believed Hannibal was plotting to make war against them again. They wanted him a prisoner, or dead in Rome.

So Hannibal took flight. He lived in secrecy until, when he was in his mid-sixties, the Romans found him. They surrounded his house and prepared to take him captive. When they entered, they found him dead. He had taken his own life.

Hannibal had earned greatness, respect, and wealth—he had learned from his father well. But the one lesson he learned best, hate, left him with nothing but emptiness.





Activities for School and Home

Write a Hannibal Ballad Ballads are among the oldest forms of poetry. Often set to music, they tell stories in rhyming verse. Work with two classmates to create a ballad, with or without music, that tells the exciting tale of Hannibal's journey across the Alps. Perform your ballad for the class.

Create a Poster Hannibal had an amazing ability to persuade people of other tribes to join him in his fight against Rome. Imagine that you are managing Hannibal's program to sign up new soldiers. Ask a friend or family member to help you create a poster to enlist the aid of more warriors.

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